

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-05 SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00 INR-10
NSAE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 INRE-00 /043 W
-----038930 241121Z /21
O 240934Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1132

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 6374

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: OVIP (DESAI, MORARJI), IN
SUBJECT: REVIEW OF PRESIDENT'S VISIT TO INDIA

REF: A. NEW DELHI 1080 B. STATE 93821

1. EMBASSY HAS REVIEWED ITS FILES ON THE PRESIDENT'S TRIP AND BELIEVES THAT DEPARTMENT HAS ALL AVAILABLE RELEVANT INFORMATION. WE CONTINUE TO BELIEVE THAT THE ANALYSIS IN REFTEL A CORRECTLY PUTS THE INDIAN REACTION TO THE VISIT INTO PROPER PERSPECTIVE.

2. EMBASSY OFFICERS MOST CLOSELY INVOLVED IN PRESIDENT'S VISIT HAVE ATTEMPTED TO REVIEW QUESTIONS RAISED REFTEL B; WE HAVE ASKED OURSELVES WHETHER IN INDIAN EYES WE MADE MISTAKES SUCH AS AROUSING FALSE EXPECTATIONS OR OTHERWISE MISLEADING THEM. GENERALLY SPEAKING, WE BALIEVE THAT WE CREATED NO DIFFICULTIES FOR THE INDIANS AND THAT IN THEIR OPINION THE VISIT WENT PRETTY MUCH AS WE BOTH HAD PLANNED IT. DCM RECENTLY HAD THE OPPORTUNITY INDIRECTLY TO RAISE THE SUBJECT WITH MEA JOINT SECRETARY, AMERICAS DIVISION, A.G. ASRANI, WHO CONFIRMED THAT THEY WERE PREPARED FOR ALL ISSUES RAISED BY AMERICAN SIDE, I.E; THAT WE HAD NOT SURPRISED THEM.

3. THE INDIAN PRESS HAD COMMENTED THAT PRESIDENT CARTER DISAPPOINTED EXPECTATIONS THAT HE WOULD OFFER INDIA A SUBSTANTIAL
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ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE PACKAGE DURING HIS VISIT. WE BELIEVE THIS KIND OF POPULAR EXPECTATION WAS INEVITABLE, BUT DO NOT BELIEVE THAT IT WAS HELD IN SENIOR GOI CIRCLES. MEA, FOR EXAMPLE, NEITHER WANTED NOR EXPECTED THE ASSISTANCE ISSUE TO BE RAISED DURING THE VISIT. THIS POINT HAD BEEN MADE CLEAR TO THE AMBASSADOR BY FOREIGN SECRETARY MEHTA PRIOR TO THE VISIT. THE DEPARTMENT MAY RECALL, HOWEVER, THAT DURING THE EXPANDED BILATERALS FINANCE

MINISTER PATEL HAD ATTEMPTED TO RAISE THE AID QUESTION BUT WAS CUT OFF BY THE PRIME MINISTER. ONE POSSIBLE EXPLANATION IS THAT MORAJI DID NOT WISH THE INDIANS TO INITIATE A DISCUSSION ON AID, BUT THAT HE WOULD HAVE RESPONDED TO ANY OFFER MADE BY THE US SIDE. IN RETROSPECT WE THINK THAT WHILE THE PRIME MINISTER WOULD HAVE RESPONDED TO AN AMERICAN INITIATIVE, HE NEITHER SOUGHT IT NOR PARTICULARLY EXPECTED IT. FOR OUR PART WE ARE CONFIDENT THAT THE USG DID NOT DO ANYTHING TO GENERATE AN EXPECTATION THAT THE PRESIDENT WOULD COME TO INDIA BEARING A BIG OFFER OF ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE.

4. THE DEPARTMENT WILL RECALL THAT THE EMBASSY (IN LINE WITH GOI VIEWS) SOUGHT TO DE-EMPHASIZE THE NUCLEAR ISSUE BY FOCUSING ON OUR BROAD BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP IN WHICH NUCLEAR MATTERS WOULD BE JUST ONE ISSUE. WE DETECTED SOME DISAPPOINTMENT ON THE INDIAN SIDE THAT THE NUCLEAR ISSUE WAS RAISED SO EARLY IN THE VISIT BY THE PRESIDENT. UNFORTUNATELY THE OPEN MIKE INCIDENT CATAPULTED THE NUCLEAR ISSUE TO FRONT PAGE HEADLINES, THUS FRUSTRATING ANY PREFERENCE TO DE-EMPHASIZE IT.

5. THE PRESIDENT'S OFFER TO SUPPLY INDIA HEAVY WATER, MADE DURING HIS ADDRESS AT PARLIAMENT, WAS NOT ANTICIPATED BY THE GOI. WITH HINDSIGHT, WE BELIEVE IT WOULD HAVE BEEN BETTER TO HAVE RAISED THIS POSSIBILITY WITH THE GOI IN ADVANCE, SO THAT WE MIGHT HAVE HAD AN IDEA AS TO WHERE THEY WOULD USE THE HEAVY WATER, IF THEY ACCEPTED OUR OFFER. THIS WOULD HAVE AVOIDED THE POSSIBL-

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LITY OF EMBARRASSMENT WE ARE NOW FACING.

6. ICA NEW DELHI HAS PRODUCED A PUBLIC OPINION STUDY OF THE IMPACT OF PRESIDENT CARTER'S VISIT TO INDIA, WHICH SHOULD BE AVAILABLE TO THE DEPARTMENT THROUGH ICA WASHINGTON. THE STUDY FOUND THAT IN THE WAKE OF THE VISIT, PRESIDENT CARTER ENJOYS HIGH POPULARITY IN INDIA AND ADDED TO IT BY THE VISIT. TWO-THIRDS OF THE RESPONDENTS (1500 LITERATE ADULTS FROM THE COUNTRY'S FOUR LARGEST CITIES) BELIEVE THAT THE VISIT HELPED INDO-US RELATIONS. THOSE RESULTS SQUARE WITH OUR OWN IMPRESSIONS OF HOW INFLUENTIAL INDIANS --ESPECIALLY THOSE IN GOVERNMENT SERVICE--VIEW THE PRESIDENT'S VISIT.
GOHEEN

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 24 apr 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978NEWDE06374
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780174-0397
Format: TEL
From: NEW DELHI
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780424/aaaaaubr.tel
Line Count: 107
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: a8cac9a8-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 NEW DELHI 1080
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 13 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2870699
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: REVIEW OF PRESIDENT'S VISIT TO INDIA
TAGS: OVIP, IN, (DESAI, MORARJI)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/a8cac9a8-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014